R/V REGINA MARIS

— Ship to Shore News —

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It was the calm before the storm. For 2 days we prepared: inspecting and testing extra pumps, lashing down all loose gear, bending on storm trisails, rigging life lines. Weather radio told us to expect no mere gale but a full storm, one step below a hurricane.

The day the storm was due the sea was calm as a lake, the sky flawlessly blue, and REGINA was nearly becalmed 150 miles southeast of Cape Hatteras. Late that evening, however, the wind and sea began to build, and the barometer fell steadily. By the following morning we were riding before a full gale. Life lines were rigged along the main deck and students were advised to clip in to avoid being washed off their feet when the deck was awash. Two people were needed to hold the wheel--and the seas continued to build. By afternoon the wind was near hurricane force, with seas over 20 feet. The helmsmen grimmaced and strained at the wheel to correct REGINA's heading as she yawed across the top of large seas. The ship was working hard--the sound of creaking wood under strain mixed with the crash and hiss of breaking seas as we raced before the storm. Later that afternoon a large sea broke across the after deck, stove in the engine room door, broke up the steering box, and tore two wash ports from the bulwarks. The crew collected the debris and made hasty repairs, laughing and joking about the incident. There was a smile and a twinkle in each person's eye as we realized new 'sea stories' were in the making.

By evening it appeared we would outpace the storm, only to wait for it on Georges Bank, so we set the mizzen storm sail and hove to. All through the night the wheel was lashed hard over. The weather became squally and the inner jib was blown out.

By mid-morning, the wind had moderated to gale force and the barometer was slowly rising. After lunch we squared away before the wind and set a course for Great South Channel. Two days later we were on Georges Bank, where it was sunny, calm, and cold. A long glassy swell rolled across the bank. We were welcomed by two very sociable humpback whales who all but climbed aboard.

The next day was calm again, and we sighted more humpbacks, as well as right whales and finbacks. That evening one of our students ran short of his special medication and had to be taken ashore, so yesterday afternoon we tied up at Gloucester and officially entered the United States, 19 days out of Nassau.

Respectfully submitted,

Evan Logan
ORV REGINA MARIS

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This spring Five Colleges, Inc., a consortium comprised of Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mt. Holyoke College, Smith College, and the University of Massachusetts, joined O.R.E.S. as our third Collegiate Affiliate member. As a part of the membership, Five Colleges proposed to offer a three day training cruise for their undergraduate students. The following essay, written by a Five College student, gives you a good idea of what the experience was like.

The Five-College Oceanographic Training Cruise on the REGINA MARIS

On the weekend of May 5-8, eighteen students and seven faculty members from the 5-Colleges took advantage of a unique opportunity to spend time sailing aboard the REGINA MARIS. Students were selected on the basis of their interests in the marine sciences and represented a diverse range of disciplines including botany, biology, geology, environmental science, political science and biochemistry.

The track for this cruise was to head due south out of Newport, RI for about eighty nautical miles to Block Canyon, the edge of the continental shelf, and then to sail up the shelf a bit, and finally to return to Newport. The students and professors from the different schools worked together on the various research projects that were carried out at thirteen research stations on the cruise. The Amherst, Hampshire, Mt. Holyoke and Smith students concentrated on geological sampling of the ocean floor using a bottom grabber while the U-Mass. crew worked on a series of water tests including salinity, temperature, oxygen, and visability of the sea water. In addition, sea water was collected at various depths and live specimens of plankton, algae, eggs, plant seeds and dune grass fragments were caught with plankton and Neuston tows. By performing all of the tests, students were provided with a rare opportunity for hands-on oceanographic research that is unusual in most undergraduate courses.

Although the oceanographic research was the focus of the trip, the learning most certainly didn't end there. For the majority of the participants this cruise was the first significant amount of time spent at sea. We all learned very quickly that this wasn't going to be a leisurely research cruise. Soon after we were welcomed aboard by the crew of the REGINA, students and faculty alike were assigned to one of three watches. Watch duties involved a combination of scientific research and the duties necessary to run the ship. If a research station occurred during your watch period you were obligated to aid in performing all research. The duties designated by the crew, however, over-rode any scientific work. Duties could be as important as serving as helmsman, going aloft and setting the sails, writing up the ship's log, or doing bow watch, or as menial as scrubbing the deck or the toilets.

When not on watch or involved in research, we were free to do as we pleased, such as catching up on sleep, reading, talking to scientists, lying out in the sun or eating hearty meals. Another very popular activity was climbing up the rigging. Most everyone eventually climbed to at least the first or second yard and two U-Mass. students made it all the way to the top, the royal yard.

Life aboard the REGINA MARIS also provided a lesson in cooperation. When there was work to be done it didn't matter if you were a professor from Amherst or a freshman from Mt. Holyoke. Sleeping in soggy, narrow wooden bunks, pumping the toilet twenty-five times after each visit and having a limited water supply were just some of the inconveniences that we grew accustomed to.

The chance to spend a few days aboard the REGINA MARIS was an opportunity that benefited the students in a number of ways. The mix of students, faculty, scientists and crew provided for a productive exchange of marine knowledge. The different aspects of marine science that each student specialized in complemented each other well and led to a greater understanding of oceanographic processes for everyone. Aside from the individual benefits, the interplay of the 5-Colleges opened the doors to further cooperation between the institutions.

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